REMARKS

The Examiner has stated that claims 1-20 would be allowable. Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter.

The Examiner rejected claims 21-30 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being unpatentable over Kusanko Takashi et al. (WO98/58266).

Applicants respectfully traverse the §102(b) rejections with the following arguments.

35 USC § 102

Applicants have amended claims 21 and 26 to include certain elements of respective claims 22 and 27 that Applicants believe are patentable. Therefore, Applicants will respond to those limitation of canceled claims 22 and 27 that have been incorporated into amended claims 21 and 26. Applicants contend that claims 21 and 26, as amended, are not anticipated by Takashi et al. because Takashi et al. does not teach each and every feature of claims 21 and 26.

Applicants contend that Takashi et al. does not teach any of the members of the Markush group added to amended claims 21 and 26.

(1) Takashi et al. does not teach "an internally and adjustably fluid pressurized hollow O-ring positioned between said inner portion of said bearing and said outer portion of said bearing." The Examiner states that Takashi et al. discloses "a hollow 0-ring positioned between said inner portion (31) of said bearing and said outer portion (12) of said bearing" and " a pressurized (by spring 7) and pressure adjustable hollow O-ring positioned between said inner portion (31)of said bearing and said outer portion (12) of said bearing." Applicants respectfully point out that, after a careful search of all the drawings of Takashi et al., Applicants can find no teaching of any O-ring in the apparatus of Takashi et al. no less a "a hollow 0-ring" or "an adjustably fluid pressurized hollow O-ring" as Applicants claims 21 and 26 require.

(2) Takashi et al. does not teach "an adjustably fluid pressurized piston positioned between said inner portion of said bearing and said outer portion of said bearing." The Examiner states that Takashi et al. discloses "a pressurized and pressure adjustable piston positioned between said inner portion of said bearing and said outer portion of said bearing." Applicants respectfully point out the closest element to a piston in Takashi is element (31) and that it is "pressurized" by spring (7) not by a "fluid" as Applicants claims 21 and 26 require.

(3) Takashi et al. does not teach "a fluid pressurized and pressure adjustable bellows positioned between said inner portion of said bearing and said outer portion of said bearing." The Examiner states that Takashi et al. discloses "a pressurized and pressure adjustable bellows positioned between said inner portion of said bearing and said outer portion of said bearing." Applicants respectfully point out that after a careful search of all the drawings of Takashi et al., Applicants can find no teaching of any bellows in the apparatus of Takashi et al.

(4) Takashi et al. does not teach "a circular array of equidistance spaced springs positioned between said inner portion of said bearing and said outer portion of said bearing." The Examiner states Takashi et al. discloses "a circular array of equidistance spaced springs positioned between said inner portion of said bearing and said outer portion of said bearing." Applicants respectfully point out that in Takashi et al. there is only one spring (7) and it is centered, therefore there is not "a circular array of equidistance spaced springs" as Applicants claims 21 and 26 require.

Based on the preceding arguments, Applicants respectfully maintain that claims 21 and 26 are not unpatentable over Takashi et al. and are in condition for allowance. Since claims 23-25 and 31 depend from claim 21 and claims 27-30 and 32 depend from claim 26, Applicants respectfully maintain that claims 23-25 and 27-33 are likewise in condition for allowance.

Applicants contend that claims 23 and 28 are not anticipated by Takashi et al. because Takashi et al. does not teach each and every feature of claims 23 and 28. For example Takashi et al. does not teach "an inner probe card and an outer probe card, said inner probe card intervening between said probe array and a top surface of said inner portion of said bearing, said outer probe card mounted to a top surface of said outer portion of said bearing." The Examiner states that

Takashi et al discloses "an inner probe card (31 a) and an outer probe card (12a), said inner probe card (31 a) intervening between said probe array (5c) and a top surface of said inner portion (31) of said bearing (39), said outer probe card (12a) mounted to a top' surface of said outer portion of said bearing." Applicants respectfully point out that Takashi et al. element (31a) is an integral part of the Examiners "inner bearing (31)" and not an inner probe card. Further, element (12a) is not an outer probe card but an integral part of the Examiners "outer portion (12 of a bearing (39)." Based on the preceding arguments, Applicants respectfully maintain that claims 23 and 28 are not unpatentable over Takashi et al. and are in condition for allowance.

Applicants contend that claims 24 and 29 are not anticipated by Takashi et al. because Takashi et al. does not teach each and every feature of claims 24 and 29. For example Takashi et al. does not teach "a flexible circuit electrically connecting said inner probe card to said outer probe card" The Examiner states that Takashi et al discloses "a flexible circuit (5) electrically connecting said inner probe card (31) to said outer probe card (12)." Applicants respectfully point out that Takashi et al. teaches only (see Abstract) "A thin flexible insulating membrane (5) having a plurality of probes (5c)" and there is no teaching that it is a flexible circuit board. Based on the preceding arguments, Applicants respectfully maintain that claims 24 and 29 are not unpatentable over Takashi et al. and are in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the preceding arguments, Applicants respectfully believe that all pending claims and the entire application meet the acceptance criteria for allowance and therefore request favorable action. If Examiner believes that anything further would be helpful to place the application in better condition for allowance, Applicants invite the Examiner to contact the Applicants' representative at the telephone number listed below. The Director is hereby authorized to charge and/or credit Deposit Account 09-0456.

Respectfully submitted,
FOR:
Audette et al.

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